

MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF CHESHIRE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2026, AT 7:00 P.M. AT THE HARMON LEONARD YOUTH CENTER, SOUTH MAIN STREET - CHESHIRE CT 06410

Present

Dr. Patrick Duffy, MD, Chairman

Commissioners: Paul Fracasse, Michael O'Donnell, John Perosino, Steve Trifone

Absent

Heather Fitzgerald

Fiona Pearson, Council Liaison

Staff: Mark Cunningham, Highway Superintendent
John Gawlak, Director of Parks and Recreation
Elizabeth Mayne, Program Supervisor
Brendan Moran, Program Coordinator

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called the meeting to order.

2. ROLL CALL

The Clerk called the roll and a quorum was determined to be present.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The group pledged Allegiance to the Flag.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Eric Peterson, 101 Fairfield Road, spoke about the electric service at the bandshell. He stated that the wattage should be split to allow different vendors to access the electrical power. Mr. Gawlak will check on this.

5. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES – January 7, 2026

MOTION by Mr. O'Donnell, seconded by Chairman Duffy

MOVED to approve the minutes of the meeting of January 7, 2026

VOTED The motion passed unanimously by those present

6. PARKS UPDATE - PUBLIC WORKS

Mr. Cunningham stated that work is proceeding as normal.

7. TOWN COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT

Ms. Pearson was not in attendance.

8. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

9. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

- a. The Chairman described a letter that was received from a resident stating that the trails were not plowed.
- b. The Chairman asked to change the March meeting date

MOTION by Mr. O'Donnell, seconded by Chairman Duffy

MOVED to change the March 4 meeting to March 11

VOTED The motion passed unanimously by those present

10. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Results of Bartlem Beats Survey
Ms. Mayne presented her report to the members.
- b. Donna Mark, Friends of CPFA Artsplace
Donna Mark, 18 Pleasant Drive, presented a request to install a trail art gallery on West Main Street. The request is attached.
Mr. Gawlak will contact the Town Planner regarding any permits required and will report back to Donna Mark.

11. OLD BUSINESS

- a. Band Shell/Turf Field Fees/Staff Needed
No new information

- b. Veteran's' Area at Bartlem South – Don Falk
No new information

12. DIRECTOR'S DEPARTMENT REPORT

Mr. Gawlak's full report is attached to the minutes. Red line items are new submissions.

13. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Fracasse, seconded by Mr. Trifone

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

VOTED the motion passed unanimously by those present.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Angela Izzo".

Angela Izzo

Cheshire Parks & Recreation Commission

Director's Report- Feb. 4, 2026 - (Bold print underlined in red are new submissions).

Bartlem South UPDATE:

Need to discuss field use, band shell, policies and fees. Town of Cheshire has marketed publicly an RFP for Sound and lighting at Bartlem Park Band Shell. Proposals will be opened Feb. 9, 2026.

Mixville Master Plan: Engineering Dept. has been working on a plan to incorporate both increased parking, accessibility pathways/boardwalk, remove sides to the changing room for a covered bench on the concrete pad, new signage kiosk, relocate sand volleyball courts and add a permanent seasonal rink. Engineering Dept. has created a multi-phase plan incorporating the priorities mentioned above. DPW has completed the parking lot improvements piece of the project. The rink is completed and looks great. Town of Cheshire is recipient of 2025 STEAP Grant for Mixville Park phase II \$1,000,000 plus additional Town match \$281,800 for a total of \$1,281,800 project cost. Project will include boardwalk and sidewalks from the main parking area along the beach with connections to the south side of the park, New pavilion, suspension bridge for better trail passage between the 2 ponds, bocci court, benches and way finding signage. Engineering has been out at the park looking at the area targeted for a proposed suspension bridge. DPW shared at a meeting that All Habitat an ecological management firm specializing in aquatic and terrestrial habitat restoration and vegetation management will be studying Mixville Park to make recommendations on invasive species and also study the pond to locate a root cause to the elevated bacteria's throughout the swim season that result in many closures. The hope is to find ways to reduce closures if possible.

Mixville Park Future Plans for Consideration:

- Examine the old concession stand building and potential uses recent comments from residents would like to see it as a functional stand
- Explore a network of walkways from parking lot to beach area, playground and basketball court
- IN PROGRESS**
- Explore use of paddleboards, canoes, kayaks, rentals? Ordinance change?
- Examine the lifeguard house, is it prudent to return lifeguard staff to monitor the waterfront or repurpose that building on the beach **IN PROGRESS**
- Work with Environmental Planner and find ways to open the shoreline of the smaller pond for access and vistas.
- Explore a low ropes adventure course for leadership training and team building
- **Rework park rules and policies (ordinances)**
- Winter use the hill for structured sledding/tubing, the pond for skating with lights, other winter related events
- Renters misrepresenting number of attendees most often higher, which then creates parking issues
- Renters wanting access to unload event items but then not wanting to return vehicle back to the main parking lot
- Parking lot capacity issues rentals, season pass holders, day pass visitors

1. Community Pool:

- Main deck repairs: Community Pool Deck Repairs/Epoxy Floor capital project estimated \$100,000 _Remove failed joints and install self-leveling joint sealant from the west end of the pool and around the Kidde pool. Resurface pool deck and diving board footings. Will need to put out to public bid 2 options for treatment do not seem to be the best options to pursue. I will be seeking technical advice on what direction and application is best for the pool deck. Project on hold as funds were re- appropriated for the boiler project.
- The newer Lochinvar boiler has been having consistent issues mid-summer '23 to Sept. '23_Public Building Commission has been tasked to oversee the bidding process, and installation. Bid docs have been received and will be reviewed next week to award and begin the work. PBC has selected a vendor project secured the necessary funding just waiting on schedule to commence install. Boiler replacement is complete minus a few lingering technical issues.
- Lobby roof: Town retained Silver and Petrucelli to provide recommendations and costs estimates to repair the lobby roof. Final action report has been received. Public Building Commission has been tasked to oversee the bidding process, and installation. PBC has recommended S&P provide a design, bid docs and construction management. The bid has been awarded. The window to work in is lost because of the cold temps not ideal with the roof system and type of adhesives to be used. Project will begin in the spring.
- Pool building exterior needs to be cleaned as the sides are showing a black stain that has built up over time. Looking into quotes from commercial cleaners due to the thinness of the exterior walls. DPW recently purchased an has online a bucket truck perhaps we can work jointly and perform the work in house vs a commercial cleaner
- Met with B&L Engineering Consultants and Town Staff for an initial planning meeting for the development of the Splash Pad to be located on the south side of the pool. Project did not pass recent referendum. Meeting on Feb. 5th to discuss potential for repurpose of the grant (Community pool upgrades) to take care of pool updates (kidde pool, locker rooms, showers, scoreboard etc.)

1. Things to ponder: 1-2 multi use rectangular fields with lights (aid lacrosse, football rugby), add lights to existing field, Bartlem South Project, Challenger Field baseball/soccer combo, Disc Golf Course. Filed lights to softball/baseball fields. Cheshire Soccer Club memo dated Oct. 17, 2023 recommending to school building committee to consider expanding soccer field s to accommodate two 9v9 10-12yr old's, three 7v7 for 8-10yr old's, three 4v4 for 4-7 yr olds. This allows for field scheduling flexibility and the ability to rehab fields. Quinnipiac Park is reaching full capacity. Just an FYI the Department has been fielding calls from nonresident organizations for all kinds of turf and field requests see handout.
2. Cheshire Park Disc Golf Course: HoneyPot Disc Golf @Cheshire Park FB page. The local organizers will be working next to complete the tee pads and adding permanent signage. The course is the 9th most played course out of 63 courses statewide.
3. **MacNamara Park:** Meeting June 20th was held with Town Staff to review Mac field proposal advertising and storage shed, concessions building CYB is much appreciated for the work to field 4 as our parents. CYB held elections for the upcoming year with changes on the board. Victoria MacKenzie reached out to me as she is requesting a meeting with Park Rec and DPW in an attempt to improve relations with the town. **Meeting January 9 to discuss building project and regional tournament hosting this summer. Meeting takeaways include working with Asst. Town Manager to draft field banner policy, DPW/ENG will plot a field map with proposal for Pavilion, Larger behind backstop storage containers and batting cages. As far as the Tournament DPW agreed to work with CYB jointly to pull off the tournament if there is enough interest (East Shore and N.Branford Sportsplex both host weekly summer tournaments)**
4. **Meeting with Challenger Sports** to discuss short- and long-term plans of programs and fields. Met with Derek Hayden to discuss Cheshire challenger sports and their goals. **State Bond Commission early June 2024 awarded the Town of Cheshire \$750,000 for an Adaptive/Miracle type baseball/soccer field.** A design group will be assembling sometime this spring to kick off project planning. Meeting was held May 16 with a follow up June 6th. Some locations were discussed as well as turf types and athletes' abilities to use regular type surfaces. Next meeting July 23 to draft a Project RFP for design. Design RFP specs have been drafted by John G and forwarded to Andrew Martelli and Dan Bombero for final edits with hopes that it can be posted publicly. **The RFP for Design is finalized and publicly bid. Bid results December 12, 2025. Meeting coming up to kick off project and award the design proposal.**
5. **Lock 12 Pavilion:**
6. **Town Manager Adopted goals and objectives for Recreation: 2026**
RECREATION Goal #5: Promote and expand recreational, leisure and cultural opportunities to enhance the quality of life for all Cheshire residents and promote positive physical, social and emotional experiences.

Key Objectives – Ranked in Priority:

1. Conduct a Cheshire Community Pool master planning process to identify and quantify future capital projects necessary to continue to operate as critical components continue to reach end of useful life within this 25-year-old facility.
2. Explore the feasibility of acquiring access rights for the construction of a second parking area for the Yankee Highlands open space on the southern side of the property and oversee the approval process for the CT NEMBA proposed network of mountain bike trails on this property.
3. Support the design and construction of the Adaptive Turf Field Project.
4. Implement construction of Phase 2 of the Mixville Park Master Plan including grant-funded construction of trail/interconnectivity improvements, along with a new pavilion and a new pedestrian bridge.
5. Reprogram STEAP grant funding from splashpad proposal to other interior aquatic enhancements at the Community Pool including the kiddie pool area.

7. Open Space discussion-

- Discuss management plan look at each make recommendations to Town Planner Review and walk each open space property over time to become familiar, promote use and program potential long range
- Made a connection with David Irvin, Central District Service Forester. David has agreed to meet with us this summer to walk an open space parcel that is a priority of the town that may have health or ecological concerns or recreational interest and provide a road map of improvements. The Yankee Highlands walk occurred on Oct. 17th I appreciate the members of the Environment Comm who joined David. David indicated we will be receiving the report over the next few weeks. David provided the survey form for the next property to be studied Boulder Knoll.
- **Yankee Highlands Open Space Town of Cheshire and CTNEMBA trails agreement.** The Project received all necessary approvals and both the Town and NEMBA agreed to terms of the MOU. The MOU will now need Town Council approval at its next meeting. Meeting held a few weeks ago was successful, CTNEMBA along with Environment Commission were able to work out some differences regarding the MOU. In summary CTNEMBA has been green lighted for upper western part of the parcel to develop 7 miles of single-track trails can take up to a year. Environment Commission wanted an ERT to be performed and reviewed to understand native botanical, amphibious creatures and wildlife prior to approval of the lower section of the Yankee Highlands. Andrew Martelli submitted an application to DEEP which was accepted (first request for them this year) they will review and will be a part of the March 11th Environment Commission meeting via zoom to discuss further. Review may take up to 8 months.
- Environment Commission: Environment Comm is creating an Open Space data base with objectives and goals a fluid document for the Volunteer Trail Stewards Projects. It has filters by property and levels of priority. Trail Stewards will be logging work sessions.

- DEEP ECON Officer 203-710-2364 Ofc Maciejko regarding the hunting incident and deer stands. OFC. Maciejko did go out on the night of Sept. 30 and came across many deer stands on the Boulder Knoll and surrounding properties. His team came across 3 active stands and 5 inactive stands. The ECON officers surprised some hunters using archery equipment. Firearms hunting starts in November. ECON officers witnessed many private deer stands on bordering private properties. Apparently, the power line area from there traveling north has heavy hunting/poaching activity. They are going to continue patrols and if they feel it necessary, they will seek Town permission to temporarily post trail cameras which will then send notifications to the ECON OFC phones, and they will respond to the locations. Ofc. Maciejko does not think the situation is a public safety problem to date but they are continuing to patrol area. They want to wait until firearm season to catch hunters actively using stands on Town property. Then the Town can make a collective decision to remove stands from town property.
- David Irvin the DEEP Forester we have been working with has made us aware of a CT DEEP Resilient Forestry Practices grant upwards of \$150,000 to assist with recommendations from open space walks

8. Special events: Working on Spring events

- 9. Bartlem Beats Waiting on the results of the RFP for Sound and Lighting to understand direction, and budget needs. Brendan will be attending CRPA's Annual Entertainment Showcase Feb. 13th to scout out new bands.** Bid for stage and sound/lighting productions is for this summer only as we transition to our permanent stage we will need to rebid for sound and lighting only. Working off a Audio Visual State of CT contract that Power Station has we have agreed to their pricing proposal just need to execute agreement (\$8525 technical services vs \$8750 previous year bid). Sept. 21 American Girl concert 6pm-8pm at Bartlem Park. To date the sponsorship program has netted \$12,750

A HUGE Thank you to our 2025 Bartlem Beats Sponsors: \$12,750

Presenting: Richard Chevrolet

Platinum: AIT Insurance; Cheshire Lions Club

Gold: Advanced Dentistry; DW Gem Services, LLC; Feldman Orthodontics; Gaylord Physical Therapy; Knott & Santoro, LLC; B.H. Burke & Co., Inc.; Saint Bridget of Sweden Church; Holiday Hill Day Camps; Saint Bridget School; Cheshire Coffee, Blacks Road Self Storage, Liberty Bank Ricci Construction Group

- 10. Emergency Action Plan-** CJF concerned about the NFL player and his injury experience. The organization is creating a EAP and wanted to know what the Town had in place. The Town's EAP Plan is not park specific. Chief Casner was part of the recent meeting and believes we should

explore and create a plan specific to each park. Steve Trifone forwarded the CHS EAP Plan that we will use as a template. Cheyanne Beach Cheshire resident and pediatric cardiologist at Yale and medical director of PROJECT ADAM. Project ADAM is a national network of affiliate sites that work together to optimize sudden cardiac arrest preparedness in schools and communities. She would like to meet and share some ideas also to gain an understanding of what is in place in Cheshire. In the process of setting up a planning meeting to discuss further and waiting on Dr. Beach to submit recommendations using the school plan as a model.

11. The Town of Cheshire Planning Department will be planning the next POCD plan for the next 10 years. In the very near future, we will be contacted for input regarding all park and recreation items. Mike O'Donnell and I attended the POCD meeting and spoke for 1 hour+ on Sept. 11, 2024 about current/future needs. Mike Glidden explained P&Z is early in the process and there will be additional opportunities to meet and discuss.
12. Eagle Scout Eric Downy completed his Gaga ball pit for Cheshire Park north side of the playground. Gabe Delaney installed the Bike Repair station at Lock 12. Brendan Middendorf Youth Center Tennis storage shed rehab. Jehan Mody a project with HoneyPot Disc Golf Course. Kyle Shutts is working with Sean Henri of the Environment Commission on a project proposal for Boulder Knoll Trails.
13. **Park benches and memorial bench program discuss Bartlem South locations**
14. **Dog Park** DPW has made the repairs to Gazebo #2 in the large dog area. There is a donor willing to donate \$1,000 towards a purchase of the Gazebo #3 which used to be on the east side of the park near the solar panels. Gazebo #1 small dog area will need the legs to be repaired similar to #2.
15. Requesting DPW as time permits to update and recreate park field maps with the drone. See current map photos. Dan B from DPW is assisting us with map generation with the Towns consultant New England Geosystems. Elizabeth is working with the vendor to redo all our park maps and field layouts. Hopefully we will see some draft versions prior to finalization and viewing on all town web pages.
16. Capital Budget FY25 great news Council approved at a recent meeting the Bartlem Park Skate Park ramp upgrades along with new surface completed, Van to transport program and special event materials completed, Open Space /Park improvements including Disc Golf course Completed Court conversion for 2 pickleball courts COMPLETED, General Park signage, Pool parking lot paving, Pool Boiler and roof replacements IN PROGRESS along with funds to design Adaptive turf field IN PROGRESS, bleachers and player benches completed. All great things to enhance an already robust parks system something everyone should be proudful about!
17. Town Managers Office along with DPW and Engineering will be applying for a STEAP Grant with the State of CT for Mixville Park Improvements Phase II including boardwalk & sidewalk, ADA sidewalk ramps, Pavilion and concrete pad, misc items Bocce, horseshoes, benches and signage, suspension bridge /stepping stones issue. Last week notified Cheshire was granted \$1M request

for Phase II of Mixville Park. Town Staff meet June 10th to discuss Master Plan Phase II and to clarify project details.

18. PBC is working on Youth Center improvements (AC for great room, restrooms, floor, window upgrades)
19. Projects at various stages: Adaptive Field planning/design, Yankee Highlands CTNEMBA mountain bike trails regulatory phase/Town land use agreement, Mixville Phase II planning, Splash Pad, Pool Boiler/roof, Open Space parcel review #3 Yankee Highlands #4 Boulder Knoll with State Forester Dave Irvin.
20. Pool scoreboard and touch pads will no longer be supported by Daktronics making it a candidate for replacement. Cost to replace is roughly \$70,000.
21. Some skateboarders were disappointed that the park did not include a half pipe element. The project intention was to reconstruct a surface that was in dire need of replacement. I was able to introduce some new ramps to complete some of the open spaces once the new pad was in place utilizing the American Ramp Company designers. The designers selected ramps that would complement existing ramps at not a large investment. I do have American Ramp Company working at sketches on where a half pipe can fit with associated costs. I should receive in October. If it works, I can arrange to meet with boarders/BMX bikers to see if there is interest in fundraising say half for a future project. See handout and price estimate of \$50,000 pre bid or purchasing coop.
22. Request for lights at Bartlem Skateboard park as well as Mixville Volleyball courts. Park users want to be able to continue activities when daylight savings occurs if possible. I met with Bob Casner recently to review the location discuss options available and forward price estimates when possible. Volleyball courts may be moved at some point in line with the Master Plan recommendation.
23. PREC Basketball 646 participants for 2025 season; as compared to 568 in 2024 (+78 kids) 498 in 2023 (+148) highest number of my tenure 6 seasons.
24. Budget process is beginning FY26-27 are there considerations from the Commission for park improvements updates etc.?
25. 6th annual Lori's Truth at Bartlem January 18th another successful event

Respectfully submitted:

John Gawlak

John Gawlak CPRP
Director Parks & Recreation



Presentation to Parks and Recreation Board Meeting

Wednesday, February 4, 2026

Who we are:

Friends of CPFA/Artsplace Inc. is a 501C3 charitable organization created in 2004 to support the efforts of CPFA Artsplace and to promote art awareness in the town of Cheshire. We have provided numerous events offered free to the community such as art workshops, puppet shows, improv and dance workshops.

Overview:

Friends is requesting permission to initiate a trail art gallery by way of artist renderings of Cheshire historical sites. Artist renderings would be taking various historical sites of Cheshire to be commissioned by an acclaimed artist. The original artwork would then be increased to 4' x 5' - "jigsaw puzzle" unit that would be installed along the trail. The use of the puzzle shape is figurative and will not literally fit to each other but rather used to allow non-sequential historical timeline. Codes and details would be displayed on a plaque accompanying each unit providing information on the artist, the sponsor(s) of the piece with a QR code to expand on additional information.

Requests:

Short Term/Immediate: We are asking Parks and Rec Board for permission to installed two units on the north side of the trail off West Main Street behind Lyon and Billard's lumber shed. These two pieces would be funded by Friends of CPFA/Artsplace, Inc. and subsidized by existing memorial funds Friends is currently holding.

Long Term/Future: Any additional units would be the decision of the Parks and Rec Board and at this writing Friends has a short list of families/or businesses that have expressed interest to sponsor their own piece. Each sponsor would be given the opportunity to choose the historical site, the artist and possibly the location if allowed. Currently we have already commissioned a study of 10 sites sketched and researched by Agnes Wnuk. The long term/future of the project would be contingent on the decision of the Parks and Rec Board. The Board could decide on setting parameters such as a maximum number of units, locations of the units, limitations of sponsors etc. Additional units if allowed would create a "Walking Museum" of different artists while all focusing on the history of Cheshire.



Friends is open to garnering additional units and working with prospective sponsors according to any guidelines established by the Parks and Rec Board or limited to the two units on the trail north of West Main Street.

Specifications: Units will be enlarged by a graphics company who will produce and cover the puzzle piece cut from 1/2" – 3/4" concrete plywood. The center of the unit will be placed at eye level of a 5'9" person on two vertical steel beams set 30" into the ground and reinforced with concrete. A plaque of the same material will be secured under the puzzle cut piece approximately 18" up from the ground.

List of commissioned sites:

Cheshire Cinema
Country Club on Maple Avenue
Underground Gas Station
John Frederick Kensett House
Town Hall
Chapman Farm
Waverly Inn
Underground Mines
Percival
Wallace House
Others to consider: RW Hine, Roaring Brook Falls etc.

Summary: Friends is excited by this project as it promotes both the Town of Cheshire and artists that have made significant contributions to our community. In addition the trail will benefit from the visual appeal as well as enhancing the Cheshire portion of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail.



CHICANE

Farmington Canal Heritage Park

STOP